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U. S. Department of Agriculture

HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Tuesday, May 8, 1934.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "Questions and Answers." Information from Bureau of Home Economics,  
U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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"Aunt Sammy," said Billy, "I bet you don't know what Paul Revere said at the end of his ride."

"What did he say?" I pondered. "Let me see whether I can remember that historic poem --

"Listen, my children, and you shall hear  
Of the midnight ride of Paul Revere,  
On the eighteenth of April, in Seventy-five;  
Hardly a man is now alive--"

"You might as well stop," said Billy. "That poem doesn't tell what Paul Revere said at the end of his ride. He said 'Whoa!'" Billy chuckled, while I tried to look calm and dignified.

"Guess this one," said Billy. "There were four fat ladies under one tiny little umbrella. Why didn't they get wet?"

"Maybe they were wearing raincoats," I suggested.

"No they weren't," said Billy. "They were just wearing their usual clothes, and they all stuck out under the umbrella. Why didn't they get wet?"

I gave up.

"Because it wasn't raining," said Billy. "Now see if you can guess this one."

Too busy now, I told my young friend. I must prepare to answer some really important questions tomorrow.

"Can I help?" asked Billy. "I'm pretty good at answering questions."

So I read the first question on the list for today, while Billy listened attentively. This is the question: "Do you consider it advisable to put such medicine as castor oil in orange juice, so that it will be easier for a child to take the medicine?"

"No!" exclaimed my small visitor. "I think it's the meanest wickedest trick I ever heard of! Don't you?"



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Rather mean, I agreed. Mrs. Rowena Schmidt Carpenter, child health specialist with the Bureau of Home Economics, says that orange juice containing castor oil may be the starting point of a food dislike in even a very young child. There's no use prejudicing a child against a good food like orange juice. Food should never be used as a carrier of medicine.

The next question is this: "At what age can a child learn to feed himself?"

Quoting Mrs. Carpenter again, the child as young as 15 months can learn to feed himself if he is given the chance to practice, first with a spoon and later with a fork that fits his small hands. At first, the process will be slow and awkward, but you can protect the child's clothing with a large bib, put his low table on a washable floor, and let him practice. After all, how can he learn to feed himself, with Mother standing by his side, impatiently taking the spoon from him because he can't work fast enough to please her? If he has a few accidents in the beginning, pass them off lightly and without scolding, and let him help clear up the food he spills.

Question Number Three: "Will you please suggest some good desserts for young children?"

That's an easy one. Fruit -- raw, stewed, or baked -- comes first to mind. Fruit mixed with cereal and served with top milk or thin cream is good. So are puddings made of rice, tapioca, or bread, flavored with fruit. If you want to make yourself popular with children, serve them puddings flavored with a little chocolate, cocoa, or caramel. Custards, milk sherbets, prune whip, floating island and gelatine desserts are other favorites.

"You forgot one of the best," said Billy, when I made up my list. "Pine-apple tapioca. Mother makes that for me. Do you know where tapioca comes from?"

"Tell me," I said. "Where does tapioca come from?"

"It is a native of the West Indies and South America," explained Billy. "That means it grew in those countries before it grew any other place. Our teacher told us a story about a Spanish explorer who got lost in the jungles, in South America. He was dying of starvation. Then he found some cassava roots -- that's what tapioca is made of -- and he boiled the roots and drank the soup. It made him feel so good that he found his way out of the jungles, and told everybody about tapioca. Don't you think it would be terrible, to be dying of starvation?"

I agreed that it would, and hastened to invite him to stay for dinner, if he liked lamb stew with vegetables.

Now, returning to the subject of good desserts for children, we can't leave out apple brown betty. Serve it hot, with cream or top milk. Remember, when you serve a dessert containing milk and eggs, to include these foods as part of the daily allowance. Children who won't drink their daily quart of milk, for instance, may be very fond of desserts that contain a great deal of milk.



The next question has a familiar look: "What can I do to prevent my custards from separating and getting watery?"

Perhaps you cook them too long; perhaps you use too high a temperature. You know that all egg dishes should be cooked slowly, at a moderate temperature. If you're making a soft custard, cook it over steam in a double boiler. Cook it only until it coats a spoon. Then take it from the heat at once, and set it in a bowl of cold water to cool. If you are baking a custard, take it from the oven as soon as it is set. Test it with the point of a thin knife. If the knife blade comes out clean, the custard has baked long enough.

One more question. This one, I'll have you know, is from a young lady of twelve years. She wants a menu for Mother's Day -- a menu for a very nice dinner that she can cook all by herself. "Mother will be working," writes Mary Anne, "so she will not hear if you want to broadcast it for me this week."

All right, Miss Mary Anne. Friday morning I'll have a Mother's Day menu for you, with recipes and everything. Don't forget the date. Billy's going to cook something special for his mother, too, next Sunday. He wants to bake a chocolate cake, at my house, but I think that's too difficult an assignment, to begin with. Well, we shall see -- what we shall see.

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